Aid Mix: Tampa Bay Aids to Navigation User Survey

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Problem. The Coast Guard needs to take a fresh look at the entire aid system mix (aids to navigation and navigational aids) and determine the types of visual, auditory and electronic systems that are necessary today and in the future to enhance mobility and safety on the waterways, while reducing the cost of the aids to navigation program. In order to maintain proper alignment of services the Coast Guard needs an understanding of user preferences in an environment of rapidly changing technology.

Objective. Develop the information, methods and tools to support the Aids to Navigation (AtoN) program manager in determining the future AtoN System requirements and related program policies and strategies. The AtoN User Survey was developed to gather information on user preferences for navigational aids as electronic navigation becomes more prevalent.

Impact. The Coast Guard's AtoN Program manager will have better information on which to base decisions regarding future AtoN systems and policies. This should ensure that user requirements are met, navigational safety and mobility are enhanced, and opportunities to adjust the mix of systems for potential cost savings are fully evaluated.

PROGRESS TO DATE: An interactive, web-based survey instrument was developed, and a pilot survey of mariners was conducted in the Tampa Bay area during FY2000. Over 3000 individuals were contacted resulting in nearly 700 survey responses. The survey responses have been analyzed, and a final report is available.

FUTURE PLANS: Prepare a technology roadmap that describes a likely evolution from current navigational technology, which relies heavily on short range (visual) aids to navigation, to a future state in which electronic navigation systems predominate. This effort will be linked to research on the Next Generation NavAids and Intelligent Waterway Systems.

PRODUCTS: The Coast Guard will have an assessment of what kind of changes may be in store for the AtoN system, as well as estimates on when such changes may occur. This will provide the Coast Guard's AtoN Program Manager and Waterways Management Directorate with a possible scenario on which to base the need for strategic management actions such as the development of new policies, and certification, training and carriage requirements.